Seniors' News

Seniors' Secretariat

Giving Nova Scotia's Seniors a Voice Volume 116 May 2006

Executive Director's Message

by Valerie White

Many of you are likely picking up this newsletter at the 50+ Expo being held June 9 and 10 at Exhibition Park in Halifax. The annual Expo celebrates the many talents and contributions of seniors in Nova Scotia. This year's theme is *The Best of Broadway*, so you can expect it to be full of fun, music, and excitement.

The 50+ Expo also kicks off Seniors' Week. This year's theme, *Celebrating Seniors: Changing Images for Positive Aging*, acknowledges the countless contributions that seniors throughout Nova Scotia make every day. We encourage local communities to pay tribute to these contributions and help promote positive aging.

One event that will take place during Seniors' Week is the second annual Elder Abuse Awareness Day on June 15. This event will coincide with the first-ever World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. We are committed to creating an environment in Nova Scotia where this complex and difficult issue is openly discussed. If you are interested in a copy of our *Elder Abuse Awareness Day Information Kit*, please contact the Secretariat at 1-800-670-0065.

Another important initiative we are pleased to support is the Oral Health report prepared by the Seniors Oral Health Collaboration. The aim of the report is to develop policy recommendations and strategies to address the oral health needs of Nova Scotia seniors. The collaboration recently presented these recommendations to the Minister of Health, Chris d'Entremont. We are very pleased with the report and are hopeful it will help maintain and improve oral health for seniors throughout the province.

world elder abuse awareness day

The introduction of a new standardized Vial of Life program was announced in May for Nova Scotia. This program will ensure that important medical information is placed in the vial and kept in the refrigerator, where it is easily accessible to emergency responders.

On May 16, we held our spring consultation with seniors' organizations and other stakeholders. These consultations, held in the spring and fall of each year, provide a valuable opportunity for the two-way sharing of information about programs and services for seniors and an opportunity to discuss a variety of aging issues. I applaud and sincerely appreciate the efforts of these groups and organizations.

On behalf of everyone at the Seniors' Secretariat, I wish you a relaxing summer filled with sunshine and memorable times with family and friends.

Valerie

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Seniors' News

Giving Nova Scotia's Seniors a Voice

The Secretariat newsletter is published four times a year by the Seniors' Secretariat and distributed free of charge. We welcome letters, articles, and items of interest from you. Please include your name, address, and telephone number on all correspondence. The Seniors' Secretariat was established in 1980 to facilitate the planning and development of services and programs for seniors by coordinating plans, policies, and programs presented by the departments of the provincial government. The Secretariat serves as a one-door entry to government for seniors, seniors' groups, and other provincial bodies concerned with aging issues. The Secretariat develops plans, policies, and programs in partnership with other levels of government and agencies responsible for seniors.

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Seniors' Secretariat

NOVA SCOTIA

SECRETARIAT NEWS

Seniors Literacy Update

By Marguerite McMillan, Project Coordinator, Nova Scotia Seniors for Literacy Committee

Seniors' Literacy and Learning Initiatives
In the last newsletter it was reported that Canso, Kentville, Lake Loon–Cherry Brook area, Sydney, and the Windsor Plains area would be offering literacy and learning programs for seniors in their communities in early spring. I am happy to say that four communities were successful in carrying out these programs by having seniors' groups partner with their local Community Learning Networks. Seniors from Kentville and Lake Loon–Cherry Brook had tutors help them improve their reading and writing skills through storytelling; while seniors from Canso and Windsor Plains worked with tutors on a variety of topics of interest to them, such as gardening techniques, healthy eating, reading food labels, and fitness to prevent falls.

I recently returned from visiting these four groups with Martha Shineyei of the Department of Education's Adult Education Division; I felt truly privileged to be able to sit in on their sessions and to share the joy and satisfaction that seniors are getting from the programs, as well as in the learning that is taking place. The Seniors' Secretariat will continue to advocate for these programs to expand to other communities.

Many thanks to everyone who helped make some truly positive changes in the lives of these seniors, with special thanks to tutors Carol Boudreau of Kings County Learning Association; Cathy Cusack of the Dartmouth Literacy Network; Patricia Helliwell, Ashley Dill, and Christine Buechele of Hants Learning Network Association; and Grail Sangster, Cheryl Mycroft, and Shawna Cody of Guysborough County Adult Learning Association. Funding for this project was provided by the Department of Education, Skills and Learning Branch and by the Seniors' Secretariat.

Health Literacy Project
Another important event took place on Monday, May 15, 2006, at the Holiday Inn in Dartmouth where some 100 people met for an all-day conference to discuss how best to address the issue of health literacy in our province. Experts are still struggling with how to define the phrase "health literacy," but basically it means being able to read and comprehend instructions, understand your medical providers, recognize warning signs, seek care earlier, search for health information on the Internet, understand medication labels, know your way around the medical system, understand what prevention measures to take, better manage chronic disorders, not being afraid to ask questions, and so on.

The Seniors' Secretariat was invited to participate in discussions of what we are doing to address this issue with older adults. I was pleased to showcase the first draft of a health literacy-learning manual for our seniors. Although it is only in draft stage, the manual already consists of several lesson plans specifically designed for older adults who wish to meet with literacy tutors to enhance their own health literacy. The emphasis is on wellness and staying healthy as we age. The lessons cover topics like active living, healthy eating, food safety, practising prevention, dealing with your medical provider, understanding food labels, reading medication labels, etc.

It is hoped that the lessons will help seniors enhance their reading, writing, and critical thinking skills, allowing them to becoming more confident about their abilities to stay healthy or to better manage an existing medical condition. The health literacy manual is expected to be ready in late fall, 2006. Funding for this project was provided by the National Literacy Secretariat.

For more information on the Seniors for Literacy Project, please contact me at the Secretariat by phone at **424-5329** or **1-800-670-0065**, or via e-mail at **mcmillma@gov.ns.ca**.

Let's Make It Okay to Talk about Abuse

By Barb Baker, Elder Abuse Consultant

One of the most important things we need to do in Nova Scotia to combat abuse against older adults is to make it okay to talk about it. Making it okay will encourage people who are experiencing abuse to come forward. They will come to know that they are not alone and that they do not deserve to be mistreated. And making it okay to talk about will assist those who want to help but just don't know what to do.

stop hurting me
it's my money
treat me with respect
abuse hurts at any age
together we can prevent abuse of older adults
June 15

In order to help people talk about elder abuse and better understand the issue, the Seniors' Secretariat has posted a wide range of information and resources about elder abuse on its website. An extensive *About Elder Abuse* section provides basic information on the types, signs, and symptoms of abuse, how to prevent it, and ways to help an older person if you know or suspect she/he is being abused. The site also lists publications and resources, upcoming events, and Nova Scotia-based projects. Visit **www.gov.ns.ca/scs** and click on "Elder Abuse Awareness and Prevention" on the left menu. For printed copies of the website information, call the Secretariat at **424-0065** or toll-free at **1-800-670-0065**.

Communities across Nova Scotia will recognize the second annual Elder Abuse Awareness Day on June 15, 2006. This date will also mark the first-ever World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. The Awareness Day gives us the opportunity to shed some light on this issue and to work together to prevent it.

Improved Vial of Life Program: Another Step towards Seniors' Safety

By Lisa Lawlor, Co-op Student

Nova Scotia seniors will receive improved medical care thanks to changes to the Vial of Life program. As of May 16, 2006, the Vial of Life program will be standardized province-wide.

Vial of Life is a program that helps emergency personnel locate important medical details in the event of an emergency in the home. A vial containing important medical information is stored in your refrigerator, and a sticker on the fridge door alerts emergency personnel that the vial is inside.

Until now, the vials varied by size, colour, and logo design, depending on where in the province they were issued. The medical forms they contained also varied. Now, the forms and vials all have the same look and logo. The new standardized design will make the vials easier to identify and locate by paramedics, police, and firefighters responding to a medical emergency. This change ensures that vital information is easily recognized during an emergency, which could save precious seconds, resulting in saved lives.

The Vial of Life is a community-based program initially brought to the province by VON Colchester East Hants and then broadened to the community level by other groups such as the local RCMP Seniors' Safety programs.

The Seniors' Secretariat is currently aware of 10 locations across the province offering the standardized vials, but recognizes that there are more programs offering separate Vial of Life programs. The goal of the Vial of Life committee in the coming months is to expand the standardization so that all groups offering Vial of Life will use the standardized look.

To find out how to participate in the standardized Vial of Life Program contact the Seniors' Secretariat at **1-800-670-0065**.

Valerie White, Heather Praught, William Hill of Emergency Health Services, Roy Hollett of the Halifax Regional Fire Department, and Corporal Shawn Sweeney of the RCMP at the launch of the new standardized Vial of Life.

"By the time you're eighty years old you've learned everything. You only have to remember it."

– George Burns

Seniors Will Be Safer in Cumberland County

By Lisa Lawlor, Co-op Student

Springhill is the most recent participant in the Seniors' Safety Program that has been initiated in several other regions of the province by the VON and RCMP.

Constable Doug Williams, a 10-year veteran of the Springhill Police Department, will be released from his regular duty and will focus specifically on the seniors' safety initiative. Justice Minister Murray Scott announced this initiative on May 5.

Constable Williams will meet with seniors' organizations as well as individuals. He will also promote programs dealing with the Vial of Life, elder abuse prevention, safe banking, health and medication safety, and information about the legal system.

The initiative is made possible through the financial support of the Department of Justice and is coordinated by the Seniors' Secretariat. Funding consists of $15,000 over a three-month period, with the possibility of a funding extension.

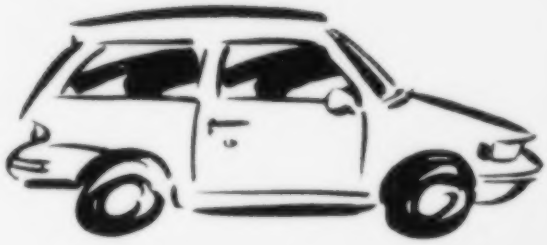
Mr. Scott said that if the program is a success, it is his intention to adopt it for use throughout the province.

The Nova Scotia Seniors' Safe Driving Committee

Freedom to drive is not only desirable, but essential for seniors to carry out their daily living, particularly where alternative transportation does not exist. The Nova Scotia Seniors' Safe Driving Committee is an advisory committee of the Nova Scotia Seniors' Secretariat. It was formed in 1995 with a mandate to protect the driving interests and enhance the driving privileges of over 90,000 senior drivers in Nova Scotia. The committee recognizes the need to keep the aging driver mobile and safe; *and every driver is an aging driver.*

One of the accomplishments of the committee was guiding the development of the Safe Driving Course for Seniors. Nearly 5,000 older drivers have already benefited from participating in a Safe Driving Course for Seniors.

Funding from Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations makes it possible for Nova Scotia drivers aged 65 and over, who hold a valid driver's licence, to take a safe driving course for seniors. The course provider will apply to Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations under the Seniors' Safe Driving Discount Program for a rebate that, in most cases, covers the entire cost of the course.



There are many reasons why choosing to take this course is beneficial:

- It will help you update your knowledge and understand how aging may affect your driving skills and how to adjust for these changes.
- Participation is absolutely voluntary and will not affect your driving record in any way.
- There are no written tests. If you would like an instructor to accompany you on a refresher road test, you may be able to arrange this for an additional fee.

For more information on the next course in your area, contact any of the following organizations:

Annapolis Valley
Discovery Driving
Cost: Free with $40 rebate
Phone: (902) 665-2831
E-mail: ellenw@discoverdriving.com

Brookfield
South Colchester Driving School
Cost: Free with $40 rebate
Phone: (902) 673-2958

Cape Breton
Arriving Safe Driving School
Cost: Free with $40 rebate
Phone: (902) 564-6106

Amherst/Kentville
Fundy Driving School
Cost: Free with $40 rebate
Phone (Amherst): (902) 667-8090
Phone (Kentville) (902) 679-0607
Toll-free: 1-888-679-0607

Halifax/Dartmouth Area
Drive Wise Driving Program
Cost: $15 in addition to $40 rebate
Phone: (902) 484-5113
E-mail: DriverED@AdvancedDriving.com

Available province-wide
Nova Scotia Safety Council
55 Alive Driver Refresher Course
Cost: Free with $40 rebate
Phone: (902) 454-9621
Toll-free: 1-866-511-2211
E-mail: nssc@rssafety.ns.ca

Available province-wide
Nova Scotia Government Retired Employees Association
Older Drivers Safe Driving Course
Cost: Free with $40 rebate
Phone: (902) 447-5155
Toll-free: 1-800-677-8666
E-mail: office@nsgrea.ca

You do not need to be a retired government employee to take this course.

For more information on the Safe Driving Course for Seniors, contact:
Seniors Safe Driving Discount Program,
Service NS and Municipal Relations
Phone: (902) 424-5851
Toll-free: 1-800-898-7668
Website: www.gov.ns.ca/snsmr

For information on the Safe Driving Courses for Seniors or the Nova Scotia Seniors' Safe Driving Committee, contact:
Jeannine Jessome
Research and Policy Analyst, Seniors' Secretariat
Phone: 902-424-4735
Toll-free: 1-800-670-0065
E-mail: jessomjl@gov.ns.ca

YOUR HEALTH

Glaucoma: New Diagnostic and Treatment Approaches

Glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness in Canadians over the age of 50. It is a group of eye diseases that damages the optic nerve and gradually causes blindness. Often there are no discernible symptoms.

Dr. Marcelo Nicolela of Dalhousie University is investigating the role of vasospasm in glaucoma. Vasospasm is an unusual constriction in the blood vessels. His research team theorized that use of a calcium channel blocker commonly used to treat problems with the heart and circulatory system, including high blood pressure, might inhibit the adverse effects caused by vasospasm in glaucoma. Dr. Nicolela's research may prove calcium channel blockers are a suitable therapy for glaucoma patients who might have the progressive disease despite adequate pressure control.

Dr. Nicolela is currently investigating the possible beneficial effects of two currently used topical medications that he sees as being a potential future therapy for some glaucoma patients.

For more information, please contact:
Marcelo T. Nicolela
Department of Ophthalmology
Dalhousie University
Phone: **(902) 473-3622**

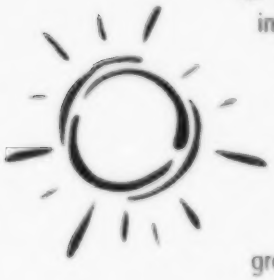
Dr. Nicholela of the Department of Ophthalmology at Dalhousie University.

Skin Cancer Prevention and Awareness

The good news is that skin cancer is preventable and relatively easy to detect. When detected in time and treated early, skin cancer has a very high cure rate. The problem is making people aware of the best methods of prevention and detection.

Incidence rates for the melanoma form of skin cancer in Nova Scotia are the second highest in the country, next to PEI. These statistics show a need to promote awareness throughout the province regarding prevention and early detection.

SunSafe Nova Scotia is currently looking at organizing a Speakers Bureau in order to inform seniors living in Nova Scotia about the risk factors for developing skin cancer, the importance of early detection, what to look for, and what to do if a suspicious lesion is found. They are hoping to recruit and train volunteers to communicate and promote these factors to seniors' groups in their area.



If you are interested in participating in the skin cancer awareness and prevention campaign or finding out more information about skin cancer, please contact:

Judy Purcell
Prevention Coordinator
Cancer Care Nova Scotia
Phone: **(902) 473-6063**
E-mail: **Judith.purcell@ccns.nshealth.ca**
Website: **www.cancercare.ns.ca**

Continuing Care in Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia has reached a milestone in its plan to ensure that every Nova Scotian can live well in a place that they can call home.

Health Minister Chris d'Entremont recently released the *Continuing Care Strategy for Nova Scotia: Shaping the Future of Continuing Care*. The strategy launches work on a 10-year action plan to improve and expand the province's continuing care system.

The strategy is focused on making improvements in five key areas that

- support individuals and families
- support community solutions
- invest in providers
- strengthen the continuing care services
- invest in infrastructure

The action plan for 2006–07 includes a number of new and expanded home and community care services including

- expanded home oxygen
- expanded respite options
- expansion of provincial palliative care services

Mr. d'Entremont stated that the strategy would not have been possible without the great input received from volunteers, care providers, staff, and many other Nova Scotians who participated in consultation meetings last year.

The strategy also includes a commitment to open 1,320 new long-term care beds across the province in the next 10 years.

For a copy of the complete *Continuing Care Strategy for Nova Scotia: Shaping the Future of Continuing Care*, see the Department of Health website at **www.gov.ns.ca/health**.

IWK Regional Poison Centre ... Not Just for Kids

Submitted by Ruth Bona, RN CSPI

"My 2-year-old grandson just drank his fever medicine, what should I do?"

"My wife splashed bleach in her eye ...."

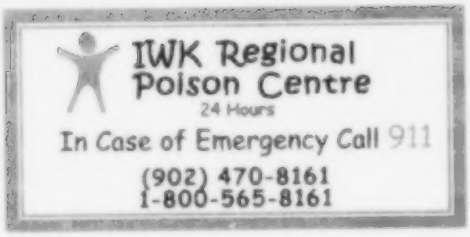
"I just took my husband's medication by mistake"

"My house is being sprayed for ants and my daughter is pregnant, should I be concerned?"

"I accidentally took my morning medications twice."

These are all usual calls to the Poison Centre. Every year the Poison Centre handles approximately 10,000 calls about poisons. Poisoning continues to be one of the leading causes of unintentional injury in Canada. Almost half of the poisonings managed by the Poison Centre involve children less than 10 years of age. However, anyone of any age can be poisoned. In 2005, 45 per cent of poison calls involved adults over age 16.

The Poison Centre, which is located at the IWK Health Centre in Halifax, services all of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. Ninety per cent of the calls to the centre involve an actual exposure to a poison. These exposures can be through ingestion (by mouth), inhalation (breathing in), skin contact, or eye contact. What constitutes a poison is not as clearly defined. It can include all medications—prescription and over the counter, supplements and herbal—as well as any other possible thing you can think of. Some examples are plants and mushrooms, cleaning supplies, automotive products, bites and stings, alcohols, foreign bodies and many more. Basically, a poison can be anything that one ingests or is exposed to that can potentially cause harm. Thus, many of the calls to the centre start with "I'm not sure if it's a problem, but I ...."



Most of the time it is a real exposure, and the centre's staff will help sort it out and will decide the best course of action to be taken.

The centre is staffed by nurses, pharmacists, physicians, and a medical toxicologist and provides service 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The staff are specially trained and offer timely information, advice, and assistance in the event of a potential, suspected, or confirmed poisonous exposure, to both the public and health care professionals. As well, its staff provides information regarding safety issues about poisons. Over 65 per cent of the exposure calls to the centre can be managed at home. The existence of the Poison Centre lessens the financial burden on the health-care system, as staff can advise the public on whether they need to seek medical attention.

Since 2001, the IWK Regional Poison Centre has been funded by 911 emergency services and has developed a close working relationship with the 911 service. In fact, the public can reach the Poison Centre by simply calling **911** and asking for the centre or by calling **1-800-565-8161**. When staff answer the phone, they will ask for the caller's name and phone number. This ensures a contact number in case it is required. It also uses the phone number so statistics can be maintained as to what county calls originate from.

Watch for more detailed poison safety advice in the next newsletter.

Four Easy Steps to Healthy Bones

Step One: Make Smart Food Choices
Nutrition is essential to the health of your bones. Eating the proper foods provides your bones with the nutrients that they need, such as calcium and vitamin D. Everyone should enjoy 3–4 servings of milk products per day to receive enough calcium. Other foods that contain calcium include broccoli, almonds, canned salmon, and kale. Vitamin D is also essential because it helps our bodies use the calcium for our bones and teeth. Some natural sources of vitamin D include fish oils, liver, egg yolks, and milk. Drinking two glasses of milk a day is the easiest way to get the recommended serving of vitamin D.

Step Two: Make the Right Moves
Physical activity is an essential element to bone health. Weight-bearing activities such as walking, dancing, hiking, golf, climbing stairs, or bowling are all good for your bones, because they make your bones support the weight of your body. Stretching and balance-training activities such as weight lifting, carrying groceries, or yoga also help.

"To be 70 years young is sometimes far more cheerful and hopeful than to be 40 years old."
– Oliver Wendel Holmes Jr.

Step Three: Adopt a Bone-Friendly Lifestyle

- Try to quit smoking because smoking causes bone loss. Quitting, even later in life, can limit this loss.
- Drink in moderation because too much alcohol, over time, can reduce bone mass and increase your risk of fractures.
- Cut down on caffeine. Try to limit to three small cups of coffee per day.
- Choose foods over supplements. Calcium supplements cannot replace a glass of milk. Bone health needs total nutrition not just calcium.

Step Four: Reduce Your Risk
Osteoporosis means that your bones are porous and are much easier to break than healthy bones. One in four women and one in eight men over the age of 50 suffer from osteoporosis. By following these steps and visiting your doctor for personalized information about osteoporosis, you can reduce your risk of developing the disease.

For more information on prevention and treatment, please contact:
Osteoporosis Society of Canada
1-800-463-6842
www.osteoporosis.ca

Adapted from material developed by the Registered Dietitians at Dairy Farmers of Canada

Your Bones: How Well Do You Know Them?

True or False?

1. Chronic dieting can be bad for your bones.
2. Carrying groceries is good for your bones.
3. Two glasses of milk and one container of yogurt provide nearly all the calcium and vitamin D you need in a day.
4. Smoking is bad for your bones.
5. It is never too late to start taking care of your bones.

If you answered **TRUE** to all of these, then you were correct!

Adapted from material developed by the Registered Dietitians at Dairy Farmers of Canada

> *"Forgiveness for ourselves is the journey from guilt over what we have done or not done to the celebration of what we have become."*
>
> *– Dr. Joan Borysenko*

CAREGIVING

Alzheimer's Disease: Tips to Reduce Caregiver Stress

Taking care of a loved one who has Alzheimer's disease can be a very challenging and stressful endeavour. It is important to remember that the approach you take to caring for a person with Alzheimer's can enhance that person's quality of life. A person-centred approach to care recognizes the need to treat an individual with dignity and respect, through understanding that person's personality, life experiences, ways of coping, and physical, social, emotional, and spiritual needs.

Not only is it important to think about the approach you take to caring for someone with Alzheimer's, it is also important to think about your own health as a caregiver. You will be the most important person in the life of someone with Alzheimer's; this makes your health imperative to their health.

So here are a few ways to reduce caregiver stress and maintain your health and well-being.

Learn about the disease and how to provide care
Knowing as much as you can about the disease and care strategies will prepare you for the Alzheimer's journey.

Be realistic ... about the disease
It is important to be realistic about how the disease will affect the person over time. This will make it easier to adjust.

Be realistic ... about yourself
Be realistic about how much you can do and what matters most to you.

Accept your feelings
When caring for a person with Alzheimer's Disease, you can experience many mixed feelings in one day. These feelings may be confusing, but they are normal. Recognize that you are doing the best you can.

Share information and feelings with others
Sharing information about the disease with family and friends is important to helping them understand the disease. It is also important to find someone you feel comfortable talking with about your feelings and things that are troubling you.

Be positive
Try to look at the positive side of things, like what the person can do as opposed to the abilities they have lost.

Look for humour
While the disease is serious, you should try to find the bright side to certain situations.

Take care of yourself
It is very important not to forget your own health, physical and mental.

Get help
You will need the support that comes from sharing thoughts and feelings with others. Also, practical help from family and friends is essential.

Plan for the future
Choices relating to future health and personal care decisions should be considered and recorded.

Source: Alzheimer Society of Canada, www.alzheimer.ca

Drop-in Centre: Support and Information Available for Family Caregivers

Submitted by Caregivers Nova Scotia

Caregivers Nova Scotia is a province-wide, non-profit association with a toll-free information line for all 300,000 caregivers in Nova Scotia. The number is **1-877-488-7390**.

"We define a caregiver as a friend or family member, of any age, giving unpaid care to partners, children with special needs, parents, siblings, in-laws, friends, neighbours, and ... well really anyone," says Fiona Haysom, the Caregiver Support Coordinator with the association.

To complement the information line, there is now a drop-in centre at their offices in Veith House, 3115 Veith Street in Halifax. The drop-in centre is open on Tuesday mornings from 10:00 a.m. until noon. Caregivers are encouraged to come by for refreshments and a chat, to read any of the materials available to them, or borrow books and videos from the library. There are resources people can take home with them to share with other caregivers.

The drop-in centre is just one of the new services offered by the association. Non-disease-specific caregiver support groups meet on Wednesday afternoons from 1 to 3 p.m., also at the Veith House offices. Please register with Fiona at **431-3297**.

Lastly, the newly updated website at **www.caregiversNS.org** has a virtual support group called Round the Kitchen Table, where caregivers can share ideas, questions, and concerns. They can also look up information and create their own caregiver guide, specific to their needs, in the Info Centre section.

Caregivers Nova Scotia will be moving in August 2006 to the Halifax Shopping Centre. All phone numbers will remain the same. The drop-in centre and support group times will also remain the same.

10 Tips for Caregivers

1. Reward yourself with frequent respite breaks.
2. Watch out for signs of depression and get professional help if you need it.
3. Accept offers of help and suggest specific things that people can do.
4. Educate yourself about your loved one's condition.
5. Be open to technologies and ideas that promote your loved one's independence.
6. Trust your instincts. Most of the time they'll lead you in the right direction.
7. Grieve for your losses and then allow yourself to dream new dreams.
8. Stand up for your rights.
9. Seek support from other caregivers.
10. Be good to your back. Caregivers often do a lot of lifting, pushing, and pulling.

Source: National Family Caregivers Association

POSITIVE LIVING

Seniors and Loneliness

What is the difference between being alone and loneliness?
Being alone means just that—being on your own. But being lonely usually means being unhappy because you lack emotional and social relationships or you are unhappy with the ones you have. Loneliness can be about the number of friends or people in your life or about whether or not you feel connected to them. Some people have always enjoyed being alone and do not feel lonely. Others have never lived alone and find it difficult to be alone in later life.

What leads to loneliness in later life?
Loneliness can be caused by changes that occur in later life such as changes in health, lifestyle, roles, or support. Loneliness can also result from the death of a spouse or a friend. It can be due to the inability to make new friends or not wanting to "gamble" on losing another friend. Not being able to drive, living in a rural or remote area, and even the season can make people feel lonely.

How do some people react to loneliness?
Unfortunately, being lonely can be hard on a person's health, and it can affect the immune system and can cause stress. Some people react by relying on alcohol and medication to deal with stress, and others become so desperate that they may consider suicide.

Test Yourself
How lonely are you and where do you fit on the *loneliness scale?*

Ask yourself:

1. Do I have someone in my life who understands me?
2. Do I have someone I can talk to easily?
3. Have I felt close to someone for a long time?
4. Do I have a network of friends?
5. Do I like my life the way it is?

If you answered "No" to one or more of these questions, loneliness may be affecting your life.

What can you do?
Start with small things. Smile! As one senior put it "It doesn't cost five cents to smile."

Say Hi! Take a second to say "Good morning, good afternoon, or good night" to someone you meet.

Reach out to others. Talk to a neighbour, a relative, or a friend. Invite them for a short walk; it may do you both good.

Encourage your friend or neighbour, but don't push. Do you know someone who cannot or "will not" make friends? Sometimes it just takes patience. People who are not lonely often do not realize how hard it is for those who are lonely to try and make friends.

Be a friend. Show an interest in others; be kind and friendly. People are attracted to people who are nice to them.

Take a chance. Developing new relationships can make life worthwhile, at any age.

Help someone. People often feel better when they help someone else.

Look your best. How's your appearance? Women and men say they appreciate being around a person who bathes regularly and wears clean clothes.

Make use of what is available. Take a shuttle bus somewhere. It may be for groceries or just to get out and talk to people.

Stay connected. Do you have friends whose partners have died? Continue to invite them to activities they were involved in before the partner's death.

Take that extra step. If you invite neighbours to a seniors' dinner, offer to sit with them at the table to help them get over their initial shyness.

Loneliness and Depression
If you feel sad or anxious for weeks on end, if you are not sleeping well and have lost your appetite, and if you are avoiding people, you may be depressed. **Don't go it alone. Seek help from your local health professional.**

This information was taken from *Seniors Speak Out About … Loneliness* produced by Seeking Solutions: Canadian Community Action on Seniors and Alcohol Issues. See **www.agingincanada.ca**.

Nova Scotia 55+ Games Society: Let's Get Active!

The Nova Scotia 55+ Games Society was formed in November 2003. One of their main goals is to promote improved health through active physical and mental activity. It is a society that provides an opportunity for older adults to expand and develop social interaction as well as promoting a positive, active image of older adults.

The society offers many fun activities such as 5-pin bowling, 8-ball, 45's, archery, badminton, candlepin bowling, carpet bowling, contract bridge, cribbage, curling, cycling, duplicate bridge, floor curling, floor schuffleboard, golf, hockey, horseshoes, lawn bowls, Scrabble, skip-bo, slo-pitch, swimming, table tennis, tennis, track & field, washer toss, and whist.

Since the society started, they have had many accomplishments. In September 2004 the 55+ Games Society sent a team of 15 participants to the Canada Seniors' Games in Whitehorse. In September 2005 they held their first Provincial Seniors' Games in Cornwallis Park. Currently they are preparing to send a team of 24 participants to Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, for the 2006 Canada Seniors' Games.

"There are two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle."
– Albert Einstein

The 55+ Games Society is an excellent organization if you are looking to get active and involved. They try to get the word out about the society to as many people as will listen. Anyone is welcome to join; the only stipulation is that you are 55+. There are annual games in all regions of the province: Cape Breton, Highlands, Fundy, Central, South Shore, and the Valley.

For more information about the 55+ Games Society or how to join, please contact Pete Nordland at **(902) 638-8009** or visit the website at **www.novascotiaseniorsgames.com**.

Participants of the 2005 Provincial Seniors' Games enjoying a game of Scrabble.

Five Ways to Make Walking More Fun

Urban Walk
Start at a slow pace for five minutes. After you're warmed up, alternate between slow and rapid walking for each city block. Take flights of stairs two at a time. Find a bus stop or park bench and do some stretching to cool down.

Mall Walk
Indoor malls give you a safe environment with restrooms, water, refreshments, and interesting sights—no matter what the weather or time of day. You're also guaranteed not to be alone.

Tourist Walk
Walking can help you manage jet lag as well as explore a new locale. Check with the hotel or tourist information centre for safe routes and sightseeing maps.

Meditation Walk
Focus on the soles of your feet meeting the ground and notice the pressure changes as you stride. Awaken all your senses to what you hear, see, smell, and feel.

Forest or Creek Walk
Start with easy trails. Carry bottled water, dress in layers, and wear waterproof shoes in damp areas. Look for waterfalls and other natural beauties.

Source: The Walking Deck: 50 Ways to Walk Yourself Healthy, by Shirley Archer, published by Chronicle Books

The Things We Keep

I grew up in the fifties with practical parents—a mother, God bless her, who washed aluminum foil after she cooked in it, then reused it. She was the original recycle queen. A father who was happier getting old shoes fixed than buying new ones.

I can see them now: Dad in trousers, T-shirt, and a hat and Mom in a house dress, lawn mower in one hand, dish towel in the other.

Fixing things was a way of life, and sometimes it made me crazy. I wanted just once to be wasteful. Waste meant affluence. Throwing things away meant there would always be more.

But then my mother died, and on that clear summer's night, in the warmth of the hospital room, I was struck with the pain of learning that sometimes there isn't any "more." Sometimes, what we care about most gets all used up and goes away … never to return.

So … while we have it … it's best we love it … and care for it … and fix it when it's broken … and heal it when it's sick.

This is true … for marriage… and old cars … and children with bad report cards … and dogs with bad hips … and aging parents … and grandparents.

We keep them because they are worth it, because we are worth it. They are the things that make life important.

Unknown

Proud to Be a Senior

Did you know?

- In the 2000 federal election, 80 per cent of near seniors and young seniors (aged 58–67) voted: 83 per cent of those 68 and older cast their ballot.
- Seniors have the most members in political parties compared to any other age group.
- In 2000, 77 per cent of all seniors made direct contributions to charities, donating a total of $854 million.
- Seniors who volunteer are putting in more hours than in the past and more hours than volunteers in any other age group.
- Each year, three million retirees spend five billion hours of their time on productive activities—a contribution of about $60 billion to Canada's economy

Adapted from: Expression: Bulletin of the National Advisory Council on Aging, Volume 19, Number 1, Winter 2005-2006.

"Experience is a hard teacher because she gives the test first, the lesson afterwards."
– Unknown

NOTES OF INTEREST

Important Note: EnerGuide for New and Existing Houses Program

As of midnight, May 12, 2006, the federal government will no longer offer the EnerGuide for Houses Program. No new home energy audits will be conducted after this date. If you've had the first audit ("A" audit), you have until March 31, 2007, to have your second or "B" audit completed. The Province of Nova Scotia intends to honour all financial obligations to existing participants in its Smart Energy Choices program that relate to the EnerGuide additional maximum incentive of up to $1,000 or the Seniors' Home Energy Assistance Program.

For more information please contact the Department of Energy toll-free EnerInfo line at **1-800-670-4636**.

Scam Jam 2006

The Better Business Bureau of the Maritime Provinces (BBB) would like to thank the Seniors' Secretariat and the 15 other organizations who participated for making the 1st Annual Scam Jam such a success. The highlight of the day was the guest speaker, Barry Elliott of Phonebusters. In his presentation, Barry noted that consumers over 50 years of age are less likely to be victims of identity theft than those in their 20s and 30s. The smaller break-out sessions on counterfeiting, cross-border fraud, and elder abuse were also very popular.

Keep checking this newsletter or the BBB website at **www.bbbmp.ca** for information on Scam Jam 2007 to be held in March of 2007.

Did you know?

A study recently conducted showed that Canadians who own a dog participate in more mild-to-moderate physical activity than those who do not. Acquiring a dog should be explored as an intervention to get people more physically active!

Stay Tuned for the Upgraded $5 Note

As part of its ongoing effort to improve the security of Canadian bank notes and combat counterfeiting, the Bank of Canada will issue a $5 note with upgraded security features beginning on November 15, 2006.

New Security Features, Familiar Design

The upgraded $5 note will be the last to include the quick and easy-to-use security features found on the rest of the denominations from the Canadian Journey series. In 2004 and 2005, the Bank of Canada introduced advanced security features such as the holographic stripe, watermark portrait, windowed colour-shifting thread woven into the paper, and see-through number. These features were incorporated into the designs for the Canadian Journey series $100, $50, $20, and $10 notes. The $5 note will soon have these same security features, making it easier for consumers and cash handlers to detect counterfeits. The design, colour, and theme (Children at Play) of the upgraded $5 note will not change.

Putting the Most Recent and More Secure Notes in Your Hands

In collaboration with financial institutions across Canada, the Bank of Canada will ensure that most Canadians have access to the upgraded note within about two weeks of the issue date. The bank will also work closely with financial institutions to replace older $5 notes in circulation with the upgraded $5 note within approximately one year of the issue date so Canadians have the most recent and more secure notes in their hands.

It's in Your Hands to Help Keep Counterfeit Notes out of Circulation

Counterfeiting is a crime of opportunity. Even the most advanced security features are effective only if people use them. Counterfeiters take advantage

of people who don't know how to check their bank notes or who don't take the time to do so. Counterfeit notes are found in all denominations. Therefore, it's a good habit to routinely check all bank notes, regardless of the denomination or series. By doing so, you can protect yourself from inadvertently getting stuck with a counterfeit note and help eliminate opportunities for counterfeiters.

You Work Hard to Earn Your Money—Invest the Few Seconds Needed to Check Your Cash
Verifying bank notes is quick and easy to do.

Feel the raised surfaces of the large numeral, the portrait, Canada's coat of arms, and the words *Bank of Canada – Banque du Canada*.

Tilt the note and look for the changing colours and images within the holographic stripe and the windowed colour-shifting thread.

Hold the note to the light and look through it for a watermark portrait, a security thread, and a see-through number.

Look at the note for fine-line printing in the portrait and background patterns.

For more information on Canadian bank notes or to order free education materials, visit **www.bankofcanada.ca/en/banknotes**, or call the Bank of Canada's toll-free information line at **1-888-513-8212**.

Working toward Equitable Change: Women and Public Pensions Report Release

The Women's Centres in the Western Region of Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women released a research paper from the Women and Public Pensions Project Initiative, Phase II, this past March.

The title of the paper is *Women and Public Pensions: Working Towards Equitable Policy Change*. It provides the historical context and the economic, political, and social forces that created the present pension system. It examines women's assumed equality and the myths regarding the present system incapacity to meet future demands. The paper also documents how diverse senior women are disadvantaged by the present pension and tax systems. It analyses these issues, and others, through both gender and rural lenses.

If you are interested in obtaining a copy of this report, please contact one of the following organizations:

Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women
E-mail: **www.gov.ns.ca/staw/**
Phone: **(902) 424-8662**
Toll-free: **1-800-565-0573**
Fax: **(902) 424-0573**

Tri-County Women's Centre
Yarmouth
Website: **www.tricountywomencentre.org**
Phone: **(902) 742-0085**
Fax: **(902) 742-6068**

Second Story Women's Centre
Bridgewater
Phone: **(902) 543-1215**

Women's Place Resource Centre
Bridgetown
Phone: **(902) 665-5166**

Canadian Seniors Get Secretariat

It is good news indeed that, after much lobbying by CARP (Canadian Association of Retired Persons) and other organizations across the country, Ottawa now has established a Seniors Secretariat to specifically address quality-of-life issues for older Canadians.

The National Seniors Secretariat within Social Development Canada was established following its announcement in Budget 2005 as the focal point for seniors-related efforts across the Government of Canada.

The secretariat has begun to work collaboratively with partners such as CARP to conduct policy, research, and engagement work to form the basis of a National Action Plan for Seniors. The plan will look to address the needs of today's seniors, while preparing the government, and Canadian society, for the rapid increase in the number of seniors that will start with the retirement of the baby boom generation beginning in 2011.

The secretariat is approaching this challenge with an emphasis on collaboration. This is essential, as there are countless partners that need to be brought together to respond to the well-being and quality of life for Canada's seniors. In addition to numerous federal government departments, provinces and territories are key players, along with other groups serving seniors, including non-profit organizations, the private sector, and experts who focus on seniors.

The role of the secretariat was recently demonstrated in working with national stakeholder organizations when a roundtable discussion was held in Ottawa on November 29, 2005. This introductory dialogue resulted in a general consensus and commitment between participants and the secretariat to work together in addressing the challenges and opportunities facing governments and Canadian society as a result of our growing seniors' population.

Source: CARP Action, February 2006

UPCOMING EVENTS

Body & Soul Fitness and Healthy Living Series at Halifax Public Libraries

Spring is here, and it's the perfect time to get outside and get active. Halifax Public Libraries is celebrating the season with an exciting line-up of free programs on everything from tai chi and home fitness to becoming an outdoor woman. And don't forget to check out the libraries' great collections of books, magazines, and DVDs—everything you need to know about staying fit and eating healthy.

All library programs are free, and all are welcome.

For more information visit **www.halifaxpubliclibraries.ca**.

50+ Expo: June 9–10

It's here again! This year's 50+ Expo will take place Friday, June 9 and Saturday, June 10, 2006. It will be held at Exhibition Park, 200 Prospect Road, Halifax.

For more information contact the Seniors' Secretariat at **1-800-670-0065** or visit the 50+ Expo website at **www.50plusexpo.ns.ca**.

Seniors' Week: June 11–17

The province of Nova Scotia will be celebrating seniors this year from June 11 to 17. The theme of Seniors' Week will be *Celebrating Seniors: Changing Images for Positive Aging*. This is the perfect opportunity to get your club, society, or organization involved to go out and celebrate the endless contributions that seniors make to our communities every day.

Elder Abuse Awareness Day: June 15, 2006

Nova Scotia will be recognizing its second annual Elder Abuse Awareness Day on June 15, 2006, in conjunction with the first-ever World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. The day will involve activities in countries, communities, and neighbourhoods around the world.

For more information or to discuss how you and your community or organization can celebrate the day, contact the Seniors' Secretariat
Toll-free: **1-800-670-0065**
Website: **www.gov.ns.ca/scs/**

You can also visit the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA) website at **www.inpea.net/**.

Knowledge Is the Best Medicine

One of the objectives of the Seniors' Secretariat is to improve the health and quality of life for seniors living in Nova Scotia. To that end, the Secretariat has established the Nova Scotia Medication Awareness Committee, which has developed a number of projects to encourage the appropriate use of medication. The first of these projects, carried out in partnership with Rx&D, a national association of research-based pharmaceutical companies, is the *Knowledge is the best medicine* brochure.

This brochure provides helpful hints to improve your knowledge about the medications you take. It identifies information you should seek from doctors, pharmacists, and nurses. It will help you understand what you can do to maintain and improve your health.

A medication record booklet is also included for you to record important personal medical information. You can list all of your medicines, what they are for, and when they should be taken.

The *Knowledge is the best medicine* brochure is also available en français. Complementary copies can be obtained from your pharmacist or by calling the Rx&D order desk toll-free at **1-800-363-0203**.

If you have questions about this program or other programs and services for seniors, call the Nova Scotia Seniors' Secretariat at **1-800-670-0065** (toll-free).

Remember, your medication record booklet is only useful if it is up to date and if it is used properly.

Seniors' Health Information Session: New Technology for Hearing Loss

This free information session is offered by the QEII Health Sciences Centre. The session takes place Monday, June 26, 2006. It will be from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. in the Royal Bank Theatre Infirmary, QEII Health Sciences Centre, Summer Street. For more information, call **(902) 473-8603**.

Programs for
Seniors
2006

17th edition

This 144-page directory features information about active living, health care, transportation, housing, finances, legal matters, and more.

Pick up a free copy at your local pharmacy, libraries, physicians' offices, hospitals, seniors' centres, and clubs.

Multiple copies of *Programs for Seniors* can be sent to groups and organizations upon request.

To request a copy:
1-800-670-0065 (toll-free)
(902) 424-0065 (Halifax area)
E-mail scs@gov.ns.ca
Website www.gov.ns.ca/scs

Seniors' Secretariat

Seniors' **News**

Giving Nova Scotia's Seniors a Voice

View this issue online!

All of our newsletters are available on our website at **www.gov.ns.ca/scs**.

Mail or E-mail?

In an effort to save printing costs and reduce the amount of paper we are using, we are asking you, the readers, to let us know if you would like to be added to our e-mail distribution list instead of receiving a printed copy in the mail. Every little bit helps, and we ask for your support.

Please e-mail **scs@gov.ns.ca**
or call the Secretariat's information line toll-free at **1-800-670-0065** or **(902) 424-0065**.